

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 031222Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6992

INFO AMEMBASSY VEINTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13131

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH, US

SUBJ: LAO REFUGEE LEADERSHIP

REF: VIENTIANE 4669 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. IN THE LAST FEW DAYS I HAVE SEEN BOTH FORMER LAO DEFENSE MINISTER SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK AND JUSTICE MINISTER KHAMKING SOUVANLASY. SISOUK IS JUST BACK FROM PARIS AND HE INTENDS TO DO WHAT HE CAN TO ALLEVIATE THE MISERY OF MANY LAO REFUGEES. EMD SUMMARY.

1. SISOUK CALLED ME AFTER HIS RETURN FROM PARIS AND I MET WITH HIM YESTERDAY. HE IS VERY CONCERNED OVER THE PLIGHT OF THE LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND I URGED HIM TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE UNHCR AND THE PRO-NUNCIO NOTING THAT THIS MISSION COULD NOT PLAY THE ROLE IN REFUGEE RELIEF WHICH WE HAD EARLIER PLAYED IN LAOS AND VIETNAM. SISOUK SAID THAT HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PROBLEMS HE COULD SEE AHEAD IN LAOS. HE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH
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A GOOD MANY FORMER OFFICERS AND FUNCTIONARIES

AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT GOVERNMENT REVENUE WAS VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT, THAT THE FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEOF WOULD NO LONGER SUPPORT THE KIP, AND THAT A STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE BETWEEN HANOI AND PEKING IN LAOS WAS IN THE OFFING. HE SAID HE ENVISAGED A PERIOD IN WHICH THE PATHET LAO LEADERRRSHIP WOULD EAT EACH OTHER UP. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF REFUGEES, SISOUK STATED THAT IN HIS OPINION THERE WAS RELATIVELY A SMALL NUMBER WHO WOULD WISH TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES. GIVEN THE ROLE WE HAD PLAYED IN LAOS, HOWEVER, HE PLEADED FOR AMERICAN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE REFUGEES IN THIS COUNTRY. HE STATED THAT IT WAS CLEARLY NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNITED STATES TO FEED AND SUPPORT THESE PEOPLE OVER A LONG PERIOD, BUT THAT IN THIS EMERGENCY AND RECOGNIZING THE GREAT SAVINGS THERE WOULD BE AS A RESULT OF THE RELUCTANCE OF THE LAO TO GO TO AMERICAN THE COMMITMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS TO TIDE THEM OVER UNTIL THEY CAN FIND WORK IN THAILAND WAS IMPERATIVE. I INFORMED SISOUK THAT WE HAD NOW BEEN REQUESTING A POLICY DECISION FROM WASHINGTON WHCIH WOULD PERMIT THE LAO REFUGEES TO BE HANDLED IN THE SAME MANNER AS THOSE FROM CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM. I EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT DIRECT SUPPORT BY THE U.S. OF LAO REFUGEES HERE WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT BUT THAT INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES AND OTHER WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS MIGHT WELL BE IN A POSITION TO CONTRIBUTE. I URGED HIM TO ARRANGE FOR A GOOD CENSUS OF LAO REFUGEES TO BE TAKEN AND TO ESTABLISH A LAO OPERATION WITH WHICH WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS COULD WORK. SISOUK SAID HE WOULD GO TO WORK IMMEDIATELY TO BRING ORDER INTO THE CHAOTIC LAO REFUGEE SCENE.

2. IN AN EARLIER TALK WITH FORMER LAO JUSTICE MINISTER KHAMKING SOUVANLASY, I WAS TOLD THE STORY OF HIS ESCAPE BY PIROGUE ON JUNE 28. ACCORDING TO KHAMKING, A TRUSTED FRIEND BRIBED THE PATHET LAO SOLDIERS AT TWO CHECK POINTS AND ALONG THE RIVER BANK IN ORDER TO PEMIT HIM AND HIS FAMILY TO DEPART SAFELY. PRIOR TO THIS, KHAMKING CLAIMED HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN UNDER CONSIDERABLE HARASS-
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MENT. SEVERAL BOXES OF VALUABLES HIS WIFE HAD TRIED TO SEND OUT OF COUNTRY HAD BEEN INTERCEPTED BY LAO CUSTOMS, AND HE HAD HAD TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE INCIDENT. HE MADE HIS FINAL DECISION TO DEPART JUNE 26 AFTER CABINET MEETING AT WHICH JUNIOR PATHET LAO DARED TO SPEAK AGAINST PRIME MINISTER WITH UNPRECEDENTED TEMERITY. KHAMKING REALIZED THEN THAT SOUVANNA HAD LOST COMPLETE CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT AND THAT KHAM-

KING'S PERSONAL SITUATION WAS UTTERLY UNTENABLE.
KHAMKING SAID HE HAD ARRIVED ONLY WITH THE CLOTHES
HE HAD ON AND HAD NO FUNDS WHATSOEVER. HE, LIKE THE
OTHER SENIOR LAO I HAVE SEEN FROM TIME TO TIME SINCE
MY ARRIVAL, WAS DIGNIFIED IN THIS MOMENT OF GREAT
PERSONAL DIFFICULTY BUT HE PLEADED FOR EARLY TRANSPORTA-
TION TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE MANNER IN WHICH VIET-
NAMESE AND CAMBODIANS HAD BEEN PERMITTED TO PROCEED.
LIKE SISOUK, HE EMPHASIZED THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THE
WELL-ESTABLISHED DOGMA THAT ALL LAO MINISTERS AND GENERALS
WERE RICH AND CORRUPT, THE UNHAPPY TRUTH WAS THAT ONLY
A HANDFUL HAD ANY FUNDS AT ALL. KHAMKING IS LIVING IN
A HOUSE IN BANGKOK WHICH HAS BEEN LOANED TO HIM BY
GENERAL KOU PRASITH WHO RECENTLY DEPARTED FOR FRANCE.
HE INTENDS TO REQUEST TWO WEEK EXTENSIONS TO HIS

PRESENT "LEAVE" STATUS (REFTEL) UNTIL SUCH TIME AS PGNU ASKS
FOR HIS RESIGNATION.
WHITEHOUSE

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